CARROTS & STICKS: MAKING THE CASE FOR ACCESSIBILITY

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Agenda

◆ About higher ed technology accessibility responsibilities

◆ Risks of having inaccessible sites and suggestions to avoid them

◆ Benefits of making technology accessible

◆ Some steps for campus technology accessibility planning and and buy-in

Why Does Accessibility Matter?

An Overview…

Photo by R. Thompson

History and Definitions

◆ 2010 and since: US DOJ and DOE Dear Colleague Letter to college and univ presidents that clarify responsibilities under Rehab Act of 1973 and ADA.

◆ Accommodations: Making adjustments once a need is known. Request-based. Inherent delay. Will always be needed for some cases. Reactive.

◆ Accessibility: Being ready for when a need arises. Part of standard process. Basic needs can be addressed without delay. Proactive.

Summarizing the requirements

- According to DOJ/DOE, institutions must:

  - Provide "accessible" programs and services either directly, or through equivalent facilitation.

  - Have a plan for how technology resources will be made accessible.

  - Demonstrate progress toward fulfillment.

  - Keep lines of communication open and obvious

Defining "accessible"

- ◆ W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), 2.0 A/AA/AAA

- ◆ Individuals with disabilities must have the opportunity to:

  acquire the <u>same information</u>

  engage in the <u>same interactions</u>

  and enjoy the <u>same services</u>

  In

  as <u>timely</u> a manner

  an <u>equally effective</u> and <u>equally integrated</u> manner

  and with <u>substantially equivalent ease</u>

Risks of Not Being Accessible

The Stick…

Photo by Loops7.

The legal side

- US DOE OCR and DOJ ordered these to make accessible web sites, instructional technology, and other online materials, often to WCAG 2.0 AA and within a very short timeline (6-9 months), sometimes as a result of lawsuits.
  - Miami U (Ohio) - May 2015
  - Harvard/MIT and NAD - Feb 2015 (in progress)
  - Youngstown State - Dec 2014
  - Florida State - June 2014
  - U of Montana - March 2014
  - Louisiana Tech - July 2013
  - South Carolina Technical College System - March 2013
  - Penn State (NFB)- November 2010

When OCR comes knocking…

- Develop, adopt, publish:
  - one consistent notice of nondiscrimination with contact information.
  - tech accessibility policy and standard
  - implementation and remediation plan
- Train all responsible for webpage and content development, including staff, faculty, and students.
- Identify and fix website and e-learning platform(s) accessibility problems.
- Certify that the tech meets the standards and provide annual reports to OCR.

There are some people you like immediately, some whom you think you might learn to like in the fullness of time, and some that you simply want to push away from you with a sharp stick.

Douglas Adams

Photo from http://edenchanges.com

Keeping Users Away?

Photo from http://www.mitchleblanc.com

- [NCDAE video: "A Personal Look at Disability in Higher Ed"](#)
- Having to make last minute and costly adjustments.
- Issues in usability are often more serious for and found more quickly by users with disabilities.
- Examples:
  - Content conveyed via color only is invisible to someone with color blindness
  - Images (and images of text) can be inaccessible for someone with visual impairments
  - If the format is busy, the aesthetics distracting, someone with ADD or ADHD may miss the content
  - If wording is unclear or unnecessarily complex, someone with learning disabilities or whose first language is not English may experience a breakdown in communication

Benefits of Being Accessible

The Carrot…

Queen Anne's Lace/Wild Carrot. © 2012 Coneflower Tarot

Better design and structure

- Think of ability as a bell curve: a range of mobility, a range of vision. If you account for the extremes, you hit the rest of the needs too.

- Conscious design choices

- Valid and well-formed HTML: Headings, form labels, color use, links that make sense out of context

- Play in the CSS Zen garden

Positive Move for PR

- Search engine optimization

- Equality and inclusion

- Accessible, universal design involves structuring materials in a way that is more usable for everyone, regardless of (dis)ability.

Reaching more people

- 15% of the world's population (~1 billion people) live with disabilities. In countries with life expectancies over 70 years, an average person spends 8 years, or 11.5 percent of their life span, living with disabilities.

- Accessible materials can help persons with (at least) the following

  - Blindness, low vision, color-blindness

  - Deaf, Hard of hearing

  - Motor impairment (orthopedic disabilities, repetitive motion/stress syndromes, pain syndromes)

  - Cognitive disabilities, executive functioning

NCES: Disabilities In Higher Ed 2009

11% of students reported at least one disability
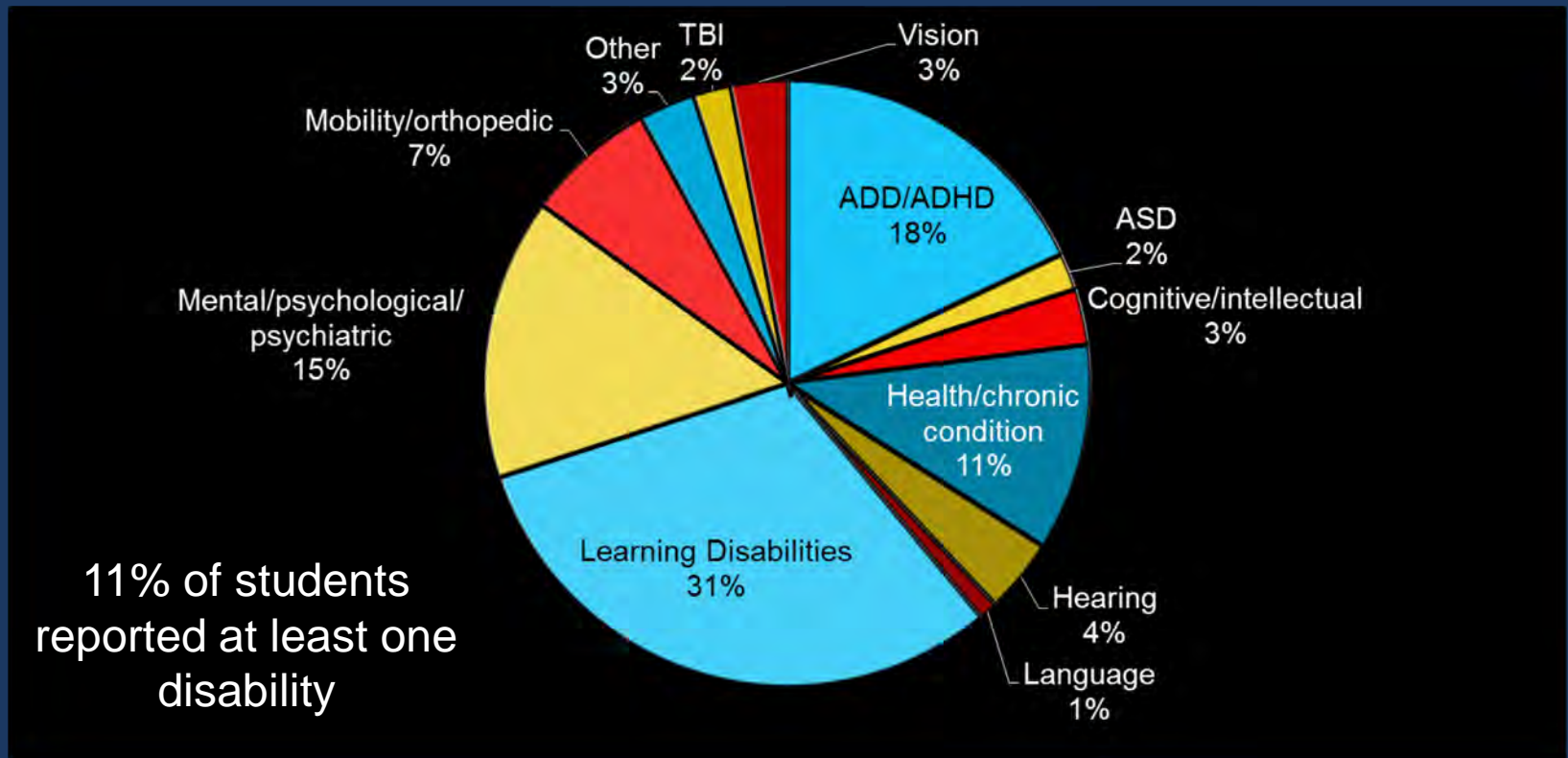
A path forward

Accessibility planning

Photo by R. Thompson

Making a Plan

- ◆ What to include
  - ◆ Public statement
  - ◆ Phased approach
  - ◆ Progress reporting
  - ◆ Contact information
  - ◆ Plan for revisiting and revising the plan
- ◆ Identify technical standards
- ◆ Explore educational resources

Starting the conversation

Stakeholders to include:

- Disability Services
- Equal Opportunity Office
- Executive
- Legal
- Web Professionals ☺
- Communications
- Public Relations
- Information Technology
- Instructional Technology
- Procurement/Contracts
- Libraries
- Faculty Senate

Photo from ELD MOOC

Exploring where we are

- ◆ Examine what we know
  - ◆ Who creates content
  - ◆ Who makes purchases
  - ◆ What vendors do we use
- ◆ Audit what we are doing
  - ◆ Survey students receiving accommodations
  - ◆ Survey current practices for web and content
  - ◆ Collect information from vendors
  - ◆ What are we using that is not accessible?
  - ◆ What policies do we have in place?

Implementation

- What can we do now?
  - Communicate with campus
  - Communicate with vendors
  - Incorporate accessibility into existing efforts
    - Faculty development
    - Web developer training
    - Office document training
    - Contracts and purchasing

Prioritizing our efforts

- **What will reach the most people**
  - Enrollment
  - Required courses
  - Required sites
  - Where students need accommodations now
- Estimate resources needed:
  - Sampling of courses
  - Sampling of sites
  - What do we need to learn?
  - Who do we need to hire?

Making Decisions

- Refine Policy
  - Identify a functional standard for access (substantially equivalent ease of use in the same place and at the same time as other students).
  - Determine technical standards.
  - Clarify alternative media responsibilities and time lines.
  - Develop purchasing requirements and repercussions.
  - Decide what instructors should handle.
- What about technology that cannot be accessible?
  - Time frames for replacement.
  - Opportunities to reprioritize based on ongoing feedback from users with disabilities.
  - Identify workarounds and alternatives to help address short term gaps.

How UA is proceeding:

- With web team consensus, start with public and campus wide web, with caveats for legacy and archive: "We can do this as long as we have adequate resources, but request that campus leaders recognize this is an important initiative to UA administration"

- 4 year timeline to reach WCAG 2.0 AA (includes A)

- Support for resources, tools, training, adapting work processes

- Adopted and announced guidelines

- Funding for web accessibility evaluation, reporting, and training tools and or services

- Web teams will create, submit, and implement plans (with help if they want)

- Technical resource to support campus needs and test vendor claims (4 years to start)

- Student workers to assist with plan and document remediation

- Captioning grants

How to begin?

- ◆ Find other advocates.

- ◆ Start with incremental steps.

- ◆ Use built-in accessibility checks and tools.

- ◆ Ask every vendor for documentation on accessibility.

- ◆ Provide information/content in multiple ways.

- ◆ Open communications with others.

Questions? Comments?

- Visit http://accessibility.ua.edu to learn more and access other resources.
- Contact Us!
  - Dr. Rachel S. Thompson, rsthompson2@ua.edu
- Together, we can make higher education more accessible and inclusive!

Thanks for coming!

Photo of NinjaKitty by R. Thompson